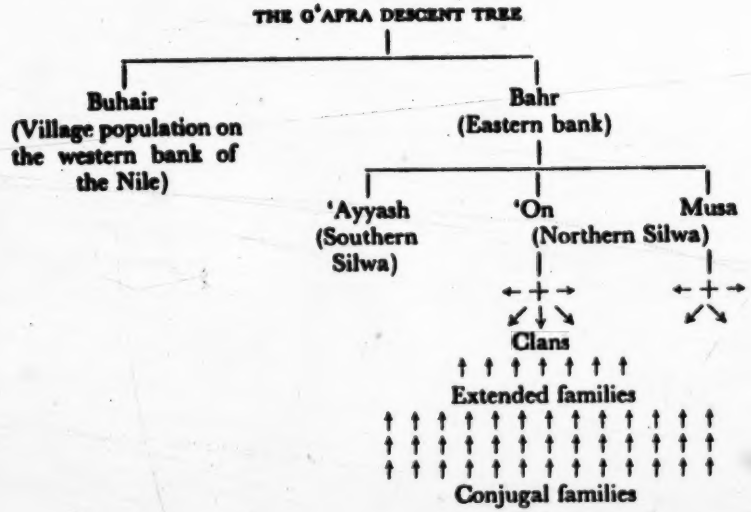
1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE COMMUNITY

The genealogical pattern, based on the (patrilineal descent), repeats itself with diminishing range throughout the social structure of the village down to the smallest unit. The village is divided into two parts, each of which is subdivided into clans, and these in turn are composed of a number of extended families.[1] The whole structure of the village, as well as that of the whole socio-geographic region of G'afra, could be likened to a centrifugal mechanism spreading out and out in ever-widening circles. Certain common structural norms of behaviour permeate the various segments of the centrifugal structure, manifesting themselves in varying degrees and in different circumstances.[2]



Pride of belonging to a particular family, especially more obvious in the circle of the extended family, reflects itself in one's pride in the clan, the section, the village, and in the holy descent of the G'afra stock. In the case of extended families, pride manifests itself in possessing a common horse which runs in races held on the celebration of saintly occasions, in having a name for hospitality, or for scholarship and piety. Pride of clan is linked with activities in the guest house, or co-operation in digging a well. Pride in one's section is revealed on communal celebrations especially during the celebration of the Prophet's birthday; each section proclaiming that it has carried it out in a more spectacular manner as each usually has its 'marquee' for listening to the recital of Koran and mawals (popular songs). At the level of the G'afra as such, the sense of pride reveals itself in their holy

[1] See Nadel, 'Beni-Amer. Society', *Sudan Notes and Records*, Vol. XXVI, pp. 1, 44.

[2] The word 'structural' here is used in the sense employed by Bateson to denote standardised details of behaviour. *Naven*, p. 25.

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

ancestry. Marriage outside the stock must be with those who can claim an equally holy descent.

The second important norm that governs the whole social structure is the weight and respect given to, and the authority wielded by, the person who plays the role of the senior, normally chosen on age basis as well as on capacity to speak and argue well, besides other factors such as economic status and social prestige. This pattern which, in the smallest unit, is the authority of the father is extended to the oldest capable member of the extended family, to the head of the clan, and to the village councils that congregate spontaneously, having no formal composition.

The third aspect which asserts itself in the various units of the social structure is the feeling of fellowship. The individual finds himself consciously or unconsciously merged into the group. Starting in this case with the largest unit of G'afra as a whole, one is not surprised to find that no elaborate electioneering campaign is required to persuade the G'afra villages to vote for the candidate who belongs to their stock. In fact, the same candidate for Silwa constituency (including the town of Edfu) has won the last three elections with a sweeping majority, irrespective of the political views of his opponents. Throughout the whole of Silwa region, the opposing candidate had never secured more than a hundred votes out of at least three thousand. The rule is that the people of Silwa should vote for their 'paternal cousin'. Yet in the last elections another candidate from the G'afra, the official holder of the ancestry register and a religious man whose grandfather was the leader in the mystic order of the village, stood for the elections to compete with the previous member [1] The reason for that, I was told, is that they once had a heated argument as to whose father was the more respected and honoured man amongst the G'afra. It was also generally believed that the new candidate was encouraged by the 'Ababda. The G'afra split their votes between the two, neither thereby winning the elections. This is strong evidence that kinship relations, and not party politics, decide the issue of the elections in this community.

On the clan level, the sentiment of fellowship shows itself in all the activities connected with the guest house. Suppose a distinguished guest has come to the guest house, e.g. a well-known religious man, or a man with social prestige from a neighbouring town; it is not only one man who receives him, but as many as possible of the heads of the extended families of the clan; and he might be invited by more than one clan. The money for the slain ram (dabiha) is collected from the heads of the families and called 'firda'-spread. The meal is cooked, each family providing its bread; meat and vegetables are provided from the 'common pot', and then they take their round trays to the guest house. The same happens with tea. Clan fellowship takes place during the night entertainments that are held

[1] In Silwa there is a strong connection between political authority and religious authority. This theme has been brought out clearly in E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica*, O.U.P., 1949.

CHAPTER IV

THE FELLAH AT WORK

The preceding chapters have given a general picture of the physical and social environment of the Egyptian peasantry. Thus the problem has been stated and approached. We can now attack it directly, by considering the fellah himself, first of all at the work from which he derives his name. 121

The Arabic word *fellàh*, which has passed into most modern languages, is the intensive adjective of the verb *fàlaha*, which means to till the ground, labour or toil. 101

As the reader will have already observed, the fellah is looked upon primarily, if not exclusively, as a 'hand' or agricultural machine. As "economic man", he is equated with labour. 186 369

The work of the fellah, even more than his physical and mental make-up or his habitat, is determined by the double environment we have been considering. It seems in fact the mere consequence of the opportunities and limitations created by the soil and by society. His work will thus lead us to the consideration of the fellah as a human being, for it is he who in return carries on the work of the soil and adapts it to human needs. We have here a clear case of reciprocal festivals, interaction. 121 183

1. Methods of Work

The dark soil is not only productive, but also exacting from one year's end to another. The fellah, who is not obliged by the Koran to take a weekly day of rest, works the whole year round, and takes a holiday only at the great festivals, that is to say about ten days in a twelvemonth. 134 461

The sun shines for at least eleven hours a day, and in May, June and July nearer fifteen. The fellah spends by far the greater part of his time in the fields, and for some kinds of work stays there all night. 132 461

F
144 type is dominant, and the other recessive. This absorption
174 of neighbouring and therefore not unnaturally somewhat
175 similar elements by a settled people of greater vigour and numbers seems a logical process. Had the invaders or immigrants arrived in millions, had they come from Germany or the Balkans, they might perhaps have imposed their own type, despite the influence of climate and way of living. But the deserts on East and West, the depth inland to the South, and the unusual character of the Nile Valley, as well as the density of the original population, have kept the country free from all mass immigrations.

Thus both geographical and historical factors have conspired to preserve the Egyptian type. The country population especially retains a facial appearance distinguishing it among the countless mixtures of the Near East.

C
F
144 It has been said that the Copts are the purest represen-
779 tatives of the ancient stock. This is true in the towns,
186 where the Copts are usually the original inhabitants, while the Moslems are for the most part descended from Arabs and Turks, and have married women from any and every country. Racial and physical differences are here very clear. In the country, however, this theory does not fit the facts. The fellaheen who have remained Christian and those who have become Moslems are of one and the same origin. If the former for religious reasons marry only with Christians and have thus kept the race pure, tradition has made the latter no less exclusive. The antipathy between fellaheen and Bedouin makes marriages between them extremely rare, and any union with a foreigner who may chance to live in the village is considered scandalous in the extreme.

F
142 Thus it is possible, in describing the type, to generalise without appreciable error.

The fellah is a heavily built man, though not stout. His skull and face are broad, his forehead narrow, his eyes and hair dark. He has rather prominent cheekbones, a thick nose, full but not protruding lips, and a heavy jaw. His features on the whole are rugged but not ill-favoured, and are neither very sensitive nor very expressive. His thick wrists, ankles and neck distinguish him from the supple Bedouin. His back is rounded, his shoulders not so much sloping as bent in towards the chest, and his hips narrow.

702 proves the capacities of the fellah. Here again the question of education comes in.

Nowadays the resistance to enlistment should be growing less. The men are better treated. When they leave the [554] army, in decent clothes, after five years of service under military discipline, they have lost their uncouthness and become *effendis*, gentlemen.

152 When a fellah is in barracks, or when he has taken
186 up work in a town so as to make a little money, he never forgets his native village, and homesickness shows on his stolid face. He tries at least to keep up contact with home and to retain some of its habits. Many a time the author [702 123] has written letters at the dictation of these illiterate peasants, who hate being uprooted. It is always the same story: "Tell me how the crops are getting on. Give my best wishes to So-and-so, and to So-and-so".

621 If the vital interests of a village are in immediate
186 danger, each villager feels a strong sense of unity with the group; men, women, and children unite in a single force. Witness the dramatic affair of Abu Shâdy in 1936. As part of a scheme to reorganise the drainage the Irrigation
579 Department had decided to cut off a canal that had watered
186 the whole district for thirty years. The entire population rose against the labourers, against the police, even against the military, to prevent the diversion of the water. They held out against all these forces for several days. The women stood in the front line to urge on the men, the children provided a supply of missiles, and a regular strategy was improvised.

621 When a moneylender, a landowner, or a *nâzer* has carried
682 his exactions too far, and is killed with public approval, the
609 finest sleuth cannot discover the murderer, so close is the
579 conspiracy of silence. Should one village, or even a few people belonging to it, insult or injure the next, the inhabitants of the latter show a united front and avenge the insult with stones, clubs or guns (for many fellaheen possess these forbidden arms. Thanks, however, to the intervention of the police, these village wars are becoming less common, though private feuds are still as frequent, as fierce, and as sudden as ever (**).

476 Here is one of the contradictions of fellah life. In the
577 village everybody knows everybody else, and no-one would

683 rushed upon the young man. He fell, pierced by several
579 knife wounds. Bakr's men, as soon as they heard of the crime, bore down on the spot with rifles and staves, crying "Allah, Allah!". The others replied with the same cries, and the battle began in earnest. An hour later there were three dead and many wounded. By midnight the two parties, determined to fight to the death, had taken up positions in the hills. The police had the greatest difficulty in restoring order.

186 Race hatred between Arab and fellah, and religious hatred
779 between Copt and Moslem, though lulled by common lives and interests, are never completely extinguished, and furnish the explanation of many a drama.

571 So trust and mistrust persist side by side. The main
181 source of both is the soil, which unites the fellaheen if it is
186 threatened, but divides them as they own or covet it. Thus
[621] the peasant group, united against the outside world, is divided within itself. Patriotism and nationality mean no more to the fellaheen than the ideas of co-operation, public interest, or civic pride. The village in Egypt is not a community in the social sense; it is not an organism, but a mass.

Similarity in their mode of life, and propinquity, do not necessarily create a deep relationship among human beings. A certain spiritual life is needed, or at least a certain personality, to make social relations possible. The fellah appears to be as little of a personality as he is of an individual. Absorbed in the soil, and oppressed by those above him, he lives collectively but not socially. Though living in a herd, he remains solitary and aloof.

This absence of co-ordination among elements in themselves homogeneous has kept the Egyptian village, the typical peasant group, in the primitive state of a conglomeration lacking either material or intellectual system. Through fifty centuries Government after Government has maintained this formlessness, as it greatly strengthens the central authority.

Such are the common features of the fellaheen, and of the 14,000 places in which they live (").

3: Ayrout M-5 (ca. 1935) 1945
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Copts MR10

F 113

See E.W. Lane : MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF THE MODERN EGYPTIANS : Everyman Library.

F [192] 63a. *T.*—There seems no justification for connecting the Arabic RIF with the French RIVE.

64. In the United States, however, for example in Tennessee, cotton carnivals take place. In the town of Memphis exhibitions and processions with carts are organised for four days in May. The first festival took place in 1931, and very soon the carnival became an extremely popular holiday.

F [527 171]

See J. Taylor : TENNESSEE TABLEAUX, in THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC MAGAZINE for May 1939.

65. Winifred Blackman : THE FELLAHIN OF UPPER EGYPT : Harrap, 1927.

66. *T.*—Retranslated from the French, which gives no reference.

67. Muhammad El-Kolaly : ESSAI SUR LES CAUSES DE LA CRIMINALITÉ EN EGYPTE : Librairie de Droit et de Jurisprudence, Paris, 1939.

F [563 443 186]

68. KHAWAGA is the usual term for a Christian merchant, generally a Greek, but in Upper Egypt often a Copt. In Cairo and Lower Egypt it is the usual word for a European. Its use implies a certain respect, and even servility.

C F [175 346]

69. *T.*—The early hermits of the Egyptian deserts were first assembled into monastic communities by St. Pachomius about 320 A.D. near the existing village of Faw, just south-west of Nag' Hammadi in Upper Egypt. There are some remains of a church, which was probably founded by him. His name, in the form BAKHOUM, is still very common in Coptic families.

See A.J.B. in THE ANCIENT COPTIC CHURCHES OF EGYPT.

70. REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMISSION ON THE DRAFT BUDGET FOR 1941-2.

71. Speech in the Chamber of Deputies, December 1939.

F 191

72. *T.*—Egyptian colloquial Arabic is as far from the language of the Koran as Italian is from Latin. In theory the written style of modern Arabic is Koranic,

9: Klunzinger D-5 (1863-1875) 1878
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

gather his friends around him for a social meeting in the evening. The light of the moon and stars suffices, or if in winter they must retreat into the dark chamber, the weak glimmer of an oil-lamp. In this country nothing is known of nocturnal labours either of hand or head even among the learned, and the many blind and blear-eyed people that here wander about have not contracted their ailments through overstraining their eyes. As to-day is, so is to-morrow, and the most momentous events passing in the great world here make on most people no impression whatever. For it is only a very few that receive a newspaper, and still fewer understand it, partly because its language is too fine, and therefore not suited to the mass, partly because the necessary previous knowledge of every kind is absent. Among the ancient Egyptians the common people, such as artisans, were forbidden under severe penalties to mingle in politics. It is only the most urgent necessity that causes the citizen to take a journey, and when he does travel he makes a pilgrimage to Mecca, or, at most, goes to some other country in which Islam prevails. For in the land of the Franks something would every instant come into collision with his ideas and customs; he would have to eat, if not swine's flesh, yet dishes in which swine's fat forms an ingredient; he would have to eat carrion (that is, the flesh of animals strangled, and not slaughtered with an invocation to God); he would not have the proper conditions for the performance of his religious duties, such as his ablutions and prayer five times a day, nor any mosque or muezzin. If he ever happens to have been in Europe, or even in a town in which the Frankish mode of life prevails, he never ceases to tell his countrymen of the ridiculous and preposterous things he saw there, of course not without admitting that there was much good also, especially if there be a Frank among his audience. The ancient Egyptians had a still stronger prejudice and fanaticism against foreign people and foreign things.

LIFE OF THE WOMEN.

Though the members of the opposite sex certainly do not

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

it is just in the love-songs that we find a certain freshness and vividness. If the character as a whole were not to be misrepresented, then we could not omit from the collection, those songs which, for our feeling, are rather too strongly natural in expression.[1] Prudishness seemed to me, in this case, to deserve little consideration. I have, however, been obliged to withhold about a dozen of them.

The songs all have their melodies, although they are not always pleasing to our ear, because of their limitation to a few tones, and of being sung in a peculiar, nasal voice; nevertheless, the Egyptians pride themselves on their singing, and consider themselves a very musical people.[2] Even if I had heard all the songs sung, it would have been of very little use to me, for, being quite unmusical, I would not have been able either to write them down or to confide them to memory. I must leave it to others to remedy this; it would certainly be worth while. When the boys sang at the work of excavating, as they were usually inclined to do, they

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[1]) According to Mahmûds testimony, the most outspoken of these are sung by old women, who are paid to entertain the guests at family celebrations. In a village there are three or four such women.

[2]) That this claim is recognized outside of their own land, as justifiable, Wetzstein shows, in his remark, that in Damascus, Egyptians are chosen by preference, for street-criers (especially as musebbil) on account of their artistic singing. (Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlaendischen Gesellschaft, XI p. 513.)

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

54.

Mecca and Egypt.

539^ 186

Banter on the desolate landscape of the holy place, compared with home, the beautiful, fruitful valley of the Nile.

Ya ulād Mikke, iš ḥal wādikum?
Wādine aḥsan min wādikum,
lūla-n-nabi ma kunna negikum!

Ye sons of Mecca, how is your valley?
Our valley is more beautiful than your valley.
Were it not for the Prophet's sake, we should not have come to you.

The first two verses, referring however to Damiette instead of Mecca, are to be found in a song in J. H. Churi's Sea Nile the Desert etc. London 1853 p. 317 (reprinted by Buecher in Arbeit und Rhythmus, p. 434).

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

60.

Dogs of Arabs.

Everywhere on the margin of the Nile valley, are to be found Arab families, who, with their low, brown tents and a little live stock, shift north or south according to the season of the year. Their bristly, barking dogs are not particularly friendly animals. Moreover, perhaps even the Arabs themselves are here designated by the term, "dogs".

Ma ʾultĕ-lak, ya ʿAli?:
Baddar bina, baddar!
aḥsan kilāb el-ʿarab fuṭ-ṭurʾ bithabbar.
Win habbarūk, ya ʿAli,
maktūb u-mʾaddar.

Did I not tell thee so, ʿAli?
"Let us make an early start, an early start!
Else the Arabs' dogs will attack thee on the streets.
But if they should fall upon thee, ʿAli,
Then it is thus written and decreed."

2–5 contain a former warning, which is again given ʿAli. He laughed at it and they did not start until later. Then he actually suffered harm at the hands of the Arabs.

5 In the book of fate, according to the fatalistic doctrine held by the Moslems.

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

85.

In Love.

[x 539]

One day, à propos of this song, it occurred to a wag amongst our men, to improvise verses, and these improvisations were sung throughout that entire afternoon and, indeed, to the Egyptian national hymn. This hymn is a very curious, musical production, which, I am told, was composed after the oriental style, by a European.

[186] [533]

Ṭalī'a min bēt abūha
rēḥe ḥōš eg-gimāl,
'ēnha-l-ḥabībha terā'i
wil-maḥrame fidha-š-šimāl.

As she comes out of her father's house
And goes toward the camel-yard,
Her eye looks after her beloved,
And her handkerchief is in her left hand.

[293] 2. The place enclosed by a cactus-hedge or otherwise, in which the camels pasture. It lies outside the village proper.

[832] [293] [531] 4. The women are fond of coquetting with little embroidered handkerchiefs. Compare a song in Dalman, p. 25 (from Jerusalem), which begins thus: "I see Mish'al sitting by the mill, in Mish'al's hand an embroidered handkerchief."

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

96.

An Elixir.

"If thou hadst thy happiness to buy at the cost of people's respect, the treasures revealed would carry thee through it all."

Ḥaiya, yabnê 'ammi,
wiš-balak bil-ṛarām?
Lō šuft nchādi,
rumman 'ala 'ādi,
la-tmāt yahūdi
wa-la 'alēkšê malām.
Lō šuft el-ḥala'
ſuidni bara',
la-tšil bil-ṛala'
wa-la 'alēkšê malām.

Up, cousin!
Why art thou so cast down with grief?
If thou couldst see my breasts,
Like pomegranates on my body,
Thou mightest die like a Jew,
Without being open to blame!

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

x 539 If thou couldst see the rings,
[301] As they sparkle in my ear,
Thou mightest carry the basket,
Without being open to blame!

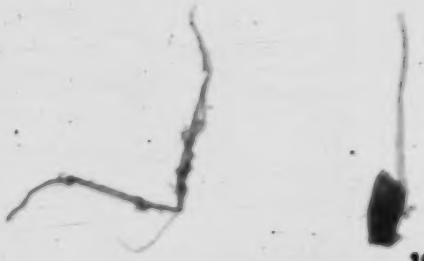
1. As marriage between cousins is regarded as the most natural thing (compare No. 87), hence ibnē 'ammi = "cousin" (masc.) and bintē 'ammi = "cousin" (fem.) are quite common expressions for "dearest". Married couples often speak thus of one another, even though they may not be related.

4. Compare No. 110, l. 8.

5. The Jews are the most despised of all unbelievers and even more hated than the Christians.

7. They are not plainly visible until the veil is removed.

9. "Thou mightest carry the basket", namely: of debris from the excavations, which work belongs to the boys. At our work, it was always fun for the boys, when one of the men, as a punishment, was obliged to take a basket and carry debris in it. Then scornful and contemptuous remarks were rained upon him.



8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

108.

At the Garden-Door.

539x
832

The friend of a youth advises him as to how he may approach a certain rich and beautiful girl (1—6). The youth himself is also rich (ll. 9—10). The girl is from the maṛrib ("the west", that is to say, the coast-land of North Africa other than Egypt), where the women are noted for their beauty, as are the men for their sagacity. Ll. 7—13 contain narration by the girl. The song was a favorite of our workmen and often sung.

[186]

ʿAla bāb il-genēne
windah: Ya gamāl!
Tiṭlaʿ-lak ṣabīye
bēḍa maṛrabīye
bir-raʾabe-ṭ-ṭarīye
wil-lāli ṛarʾān.

Ḍarab el-bāb bi-īdo,
sammaḥni ʾaṣīdo,
ʿašara min ʿabīdo
tuḍrub bir-ruṭān.
Daḫalna el-genēne,
beʿna wištarēne
we-ḥammalna eg-gimāl.

[p. 122 is blank]

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

116.

Christian and Moslem.

539x 558

A Mohammedan woman has thrown herself away on a Coptic goldsmith. The word nuṣrāni, Christian, always has an odious sound to the Moslem; for this reason the woman thinks she has claim to valuable gifts from her lover. [186]

Ramāni-l-ṛarām, ramāni
taḥtê šibbāk en-nuṣrāni.
Ma ʾultê-lak, ya-mʿallim Mūse?
Duʾ lil-kirdān ʿarūse!
Muslime we-ʿāšiʾet nuṣrāni!

Love has smitten me, smitten me
Under the Christian's window.
Did I not tell thee, Master Mūsa?
"Fasten a pendant to my necklace!"
I, a Moslem, in love with a Christian!

3. Have I not had to ask you once before for the ornament? Me'allim, master, literally: teacher, is a title given to all Copts, with the exception of the poorest classes. [554]

4. 'arūse is an ornament, which hangs zē nišān = like an order, on the necklace. [301]

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

131.

A Friendly Reception.

539x 166 464

At a time when profits were low, a Nile sailor left his ship and went, perhaps to Suez, in search of other work. He then knocked about in the Delta, and after a long absence, returned home, at last, to his wife and children, who, in the meantime had suffered need. The wife receives him with this cutting reproof, the sense of which is: Did I not tell you what the result would be? But what do you care about your family! (ll. 1—8). [593]

We often heard from our workmen, that, in order to secure work, they wander, for instance, from Quft in Upper Egypt, to Suez. This song was usually attached to No. 88 with which it has nothing to do. The connection is probably suggested only because of the picture of the ship used in No. 88.

593 539x 464

Ya ma ʾultē-lak, ya ma ʾultē-lak
winte lissa fi-ʾangetak?:
Ya yehūdi, yabn-el-yehudīye,
hissak terūḥ eš-šarʾīye,
yaḥdūk bilād el-ġarbīye,
tiṣbaḥ ʿadīm. id-dirrīye.
Dannak ʿala-l-miʾdāf rāiḥ
teṭallaʿ er-raml es-sāiḥ.

Did I not tell thee so, did I not tell thee so?
When thou wast yet on thy ship?
"Thou Jew and son of the Jewess,
Beware of going to the Sharʾīye,

[186]